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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000482

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: AFGHAN PUBLIC PROTECTION FORCE ENROLLS
"FENCE-SITTERS": LESSONS FOR REINTEGRATION

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[1](#)B. 09 KABUL 3661

Classified By: ACTING DEPUTY AMBASSADOR JOSEPH MUSSOMELI FOR REASONS 1.
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SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C/REL) On 21 December the Afghan government placed a charismatic former mujahideen commander, Ghulam Mohammed Hotak, in charge of the Ministry of Interior's Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) in Wardak province, resulting in an influx of volunteers.

[1](#)2. (C/REL) Ghulam Mohammed and his loyalists are not Taliban, but he has a checkered past and unclear motives -- he was reportedly detained in the Bagram Theater Internment Facility (BTIF) for two years; he has traditionally kept his distance from GIROA and Coalition Forces; and likely has some ties to insurgents. As GIROA's support for local security initiatives evolves, we will likely see more such arrangements with erstwhile opponents of the government and/or the uncommitted "fence-sitters" -- locals who are skeptical of ideological insurgents and GIROA alike, but may provide periodic support to either. Such experiments will offer lessons for the use of GIROA-controlled local security forces in the reintegration of former Taliban. END SUMMARY

GHULAM MOHAMMAD AS TITULAR LEAD FOR AP3...

[1](#)3. (C/REL) Since January 2009 Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A) has implemented the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3), which is a Ministry of Interior (MoI) effort to establish strictly defensive community security forces. AP3 currently operates in four districts of Wardak Province. Under the program, U.S. Special Forces provide training to young men selected by local shuras to perform static guard duties in their communities. Participants are vetted by MOI and National Directorate of Security (NDS) and are subjected to biometric screening and registration by U.S. forces.

[1](#)4. (C/REL) The 776 current AP3 "guardians" -- out of a planned force of 1,200 -- are paid by MOI and answer to local police commanders. The guardians have reduced IED and rocket strikes, and the additional security they have provided has enabled the Wardak provincial government to open schools, convene public meetings, and reduce travel time by deterring insurgents and criminals from shaking down motorists. The guardians also form a pre-vetted recruiting pool for the Afghan police, to which many aspire to transfer.

[1](#)5. (C/REL) In December 2009, CFSOCC-A and MOI decided to

establish a more formal command and control structure for the guardians, having them report to a commander who would in turn answer to the Wardak provincial police chief. On December 21, Wardak National Directorate for Security Chief Shir Takana introduced former mujahideen commander Ghulam Mohammad Hotak to CFSOCC-A officers at a meeting in Wardak. Takana stated that Hotak would take command, of the AP3 forces. While Hotak is not a police officer, he said he would attend the next iteration of AP3 training (scheduled for February 1) and has met with Interior Minister Atmar, Defense Minister Wardak and President Karzai to discuss AP3 since his "selection" by GIROA authorities.

¶6. (C/REL) Over the past year, Ghulam Mohammad had consistently hinted that he would like to join the ANSF. He had shown interest in the AP3 program as early as November 2009, but initially declined to participate when Wardak Governor Fidai rejected his demand to be permitted to organize an offensive force, not in uniform, that could pursue insurgents outside of AP3 villages. CFSOCC-A attributes his ultimate decision to join AP3 to continuous engagement by ISAF forces and Governor Fidai -- who sought to win him and communities loyal to him over to GIROA -- and to Hajji Musa Hotak's intermediary role. CFSOCC-A believes that Musa Hotak's position in the government and role in bringing Ghulam Mohammad into the AP3 give him a stake in keeping his brother loyal to GIROA.

¶7. (C/REL) His titular role as AP3 "commander" notwithstanding, Ghulam Mohammad will receive only the standard AP3 salary (\$100 per month with a \$74 monthly food allowance). He will be nominally subordinate to Wardak

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Provincial Police Chief Muzafaradin, but given his history as a mujahideen commander, his parliamentarian brother Hajji Musa Hotak, and his close connections to NDS Chief Takana, we expect that he will exercise significant informal power.

...AND CATYLIST FOR REINTEGRATION OF COMMUNITIES
WITH GIROA

¶8. (C/REL) Ghulam Mohammad's connections and history as a mujahideen commander have helped the AP3 initiative recruit young men from communities of -- fence-sitters -- that have heretofore kept their distance from the government, and have tolerated the presence of insurgents. He and his parliamentarian brother hail from the Zay Wilayaat Hausa area of Jalryz District, Wardak, which has traditionally resisted any association with the Afghan National Police (ANP) and their AP3 auxiliaries. Ghulam Mohammad has recruited 57 AP3 volunteers from Zay Wilayaat and another 110 from the equally recalcitrant district of Nerkh. Among the 110 was at least one self-professed Taliban fighter. Ghulam has traveled to villages across Wardak, explaining the AP3 concept to village elders and eliciting their support.

SHADES OF GREY

¶9. (C/REL) According to CFSOCC-A, Ghulam Mohammad spent two years in the Bagram Theater Internment Facility (BTIF), although U.S. military authorities are unable to find a record of Ghulam Mohammad's purported incarceration or the reasons for it. ISAF forces in Wardak considered detaining him again in recent years, but ultimately decided to work with him and attempt to win him over.

COMMENT: TRUST REINTEGREES -- TO ACT PRAGMATICALLY

¶10. (C/REL) Ghulam Mohammad Hotak's path to the AP3 typifies the process by which GIROA could use local security initiatives to win over and "reintegrate" former insurgents and to bring fence-sitters into closer alignment with GIROA.

Afghan efforts to control community security forces and support insurgent reintegration will have to address former fighters' need for personal security and their desire to continue on in some sort of armed capacity (reftel A) -- or at least secure some sort of remunerative work. Local security forces like the AP3 -- tightly controlled by the Ministry of the Interior, and subordinate to regular security forces -- seem a reasonable "half-way house" where local fighters could help protect their communities and learn the skills and discipline that may eventually enable some to integrate into the regular security forces.

¶11. (C/REL) Interior Minister Atmar's intention is for community security initiatives like AP3 and the Local Defense Initiative (the erstwhile Community Defense Initiative or "CDI") to graduate their alumni into the regular security forces, and to eventually merge with those forces altogether (ref B). We believe President Karzai remains to be convinced of the benefits of LDI and an active debate is underway within the Cabinet. Experiments such as the Ghulam Mohammad case should provide lessons learned as GIROA grapples with the sensitive questions of whether, how, and how quickly to offer positions in local security forces to reintegrated Taliban.

Eikenberry